

‘The fear of war was the most important factor that caused the Cold War.’ Comment on the validity of this statement.

The Cold War is named so because it was a prolonged contest between the capitalist and communist blocs with no large-scale fighting. During the Cold War, the fear of war led to political, economic and military confrontation between the two major blocs, while such fear also put them off having direct military engagement and made the war ‘cold’. Therefore, the statement concerned is valid.

Politically, the fear of war encouraged both capitalist and communist blocs to look for allies and prompted confrontation between them, leading to the Cold War. The Second World War, started by Fascist countries such as Germany, Italy and Japan, spanned eight years and caused more than 70 million deaths. It was the bloodiest war in human history and neither capitalist nor communist countries wanted another large-scale war. But capitalist states feared that the continued communist expansion would lead to a new world war. Therefore, the *Treaty of Brussels* 布魯塞爾條約 was signed in 1948 between Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg for mutual defense against the Soviet Union. When the *Berlin Crisis* 柏林危機 broke out in 1948, Britain, France, America and other countries, for fear of attacks from the Soviet side, established the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* 北約(1949), which inevitably stood in opposition to the Soviet camp. This gave rise to rival camps as well as confrontation in the Cold War. Therefore, the fear of war led to the formation and confrontation of the two major blocs and the advent of the Cold War.

Economically, the fear of war caused economic confrontation between the two major blocs and shaped the landscape of the Cold War. After WW2, the communist party in Greece expanded rapidly under Soviet support and this gave rise to the *Greek Civil War* 希臘內戰. The US feared that the continued spread of communism would cause more civil wars and eventually the Third World War between capitalist and communist countries. Therefore, the US proactively provided financial aids for European countries as exemplified by the US\$400 million assistance for the Greek government army against the communist party in 1947, and the *Marshall Plan* 馬歇爾計劃 in 1948 that channeled US\$13 billion to Western European countries. This was to prevent communism from breeding in poor economic environment and avoid the spread of communism that would lead to wars. However, what the US did aroused Soviet suspicion that Eastern European countries would be attracted by the American plan. Therefore, the USSR implemented the *Molotov Plan* 莫洛托夫計劃 in 1947 when the Marshall Plan was still under discussion. As a result, the European economy was divided into two and the confrontation between Eastern and Western Europe was confirmed. Therefore, the fear of war led to economic confrontation and consequently the Cold War.

In military aspect, the fear of war led to hostile military confrontation between the two major blocs that shaped the Cold War. In the end of WW2, the US dropped two *atomic bombs* 原子彈 on Japan to secure its unconditional surrender. Meanwhile, the USSR greatly developed its military power during WW2 and had an army of 6 million men together with 50,000 tanks and 20,000 military aircrafts after the war. As a result, both of them were fearful of the military strength of each other and worried that they would be at a great disadvantage if another war broke out. This brought about the *vicious arms race* 惡性的軍備競賽 between the US and the USSR. For example, the USSR had a successful atomic bomb test in 1949 that counterbalanced the nuclear superiority of the US. Meanwhile, it was also their fear of war that made the war ‘cold’ because both sides only had mutual confrontation but dared not to start a war imprudently. Therefore, the fear of war not only started the vicious arms race but also stopped both sides from starting a war, shaping the landscape of the Cold War.

Although ideological differences and mutual distrust between the two blocs were also reasons for the Cold War, they were not as important as the fear of war.

Ideological differences also caused the Cold War but they were not the most important factor. Since capitalist and communist countries had different ideologies, the capitalist states shared great fear of the spread of communism while the communist Soviet Union worried the idea of freedom in capitalism would threaten its control over Eastern Europe. This gave rise to their mutual confrontation and shaped the Cold War, as exemplified by the *Chinese Civil War* 中國內戰 in which the US and the USSR supported the KMT and CCP respectively. However, the most important factor that led to the Cold War was the fear of war. Speaking of the limitations of ideological differences, the USSR established and extended communist influence as early as 1917 by means like setting up the *Comintern* 共產國際 that advocated world communist revolution and assisting in the formation of the CCP in 1921, but these attempts did not lead to a Cold War. It was the painful lesson from WW2 that induced fear among capitalist states that the continued spread of communism would cause another world war, which encouraged them to oppose and contain communism and eventually caused the Cold War. Therefore, the root cause of the Cold War should be the fear of war.

The mutual distrust between the two blocs also led to the Cold War but its importance was less than that of the fear of war. There was mutual suspicion between the two major blocs as the USSR mistrusted Britain and France that diverted German aggression eastwards at the *Munich Conference* 慕尼黑會議(1938) against Soviet interests, while capitalist nations such as Britain, France and the US were wary of Soviet communist expansion during WW2 under which Eastern European countries like *Poland* 波蘭 and *Czechoslovakia* 捷克 were transformed into its satellite states. Their mutual distrust led to the iconic confrontation of the Cold War. However, in terms of causality, the mutual distrust was rooted in their fear of war. It was because of the fear of having a war with Germany in view of its expansion before WW2 that the USSR considered what Britain and France did to be diverting the peril towards the east. Also, Western European states had a deep fear that the continued spread of communism would spark off wars as typified by the *Greek Civil War* 希臘內戰(1944-49), and this was the reason for their suspicion and resistance against Soviet expansion. It is understood that the mutual distrust between the two blocs was a result of their fear of war, and that the fear of war should be the most important factor that caused the Cold War.

In conclusion, the fear of war led to hostility and confrontation between the two major blocs in political, economic and political aspects, but they dared not to declare war against each other also because of their fear. Therefore, the statement concerned is proved valid.

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